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ABSTRACT

This document examines the organization and governance of British education and presents projected plans for education in the 1980s. The British schooling system comprises nursery, primary, middle, and secondary schools, and further postsecondary education, university education, and teacher education. Both private and public nursery schools enroll about 35% of British children between ages two and five. Compulsory schooling begins at the primary level and extends through the secondary school. Secondary schools enroll 83% of students from ages 11-18. Standardized examinations are usually administered at age 16. Depending upon examination scores, students either go to work, stay on in secondary schools to improve scores or to prepare for an advanced level examination, or enter further education (FE). FE consists of all postsecondary education except university: polytechnics, technical colleges, colleges of art, commerce, agriculture, and education. Great Britain has a dual school system consisting of voluntary schools managed by the Church of England or by the Roman Catholic Church, and state schools. British teachers enjoy more autonomy than those in the United States. The National Union of Teachers openly endorses and financially aids candidates favorable to their interests. Recommendations for educational planning focus on such areas as school curriculum, national assessment of standards, teacher education, and ways to link school with work. (KC)

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British Schools and Ours

By Franklin Parker

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Why Study British Education?

By observing British schools, Americans may become conscious of strengths and weaknesses within our own education system. That is the value of comparative and international studies in any field, including education. We gain insights into our own education system by seeing how others do things. Furthermore, the bonds of a common language and a historical heritage make a study of British education particularly relevant to Americans.

Britain, like Europe generally, is moving from an elite to a mass educational system. The common problem in attempting to educate everyone is how to serve widely different abilities without incurring a significant loss of quality. Can democratic education substantially raise the educational level of all while still allowing talented minds and occasional genius to emerge? Does mass education inevitably mean a leveling down, as some say is reflected in the decline in the Scholastic Aptitude Test and other U.S. national test scores? Britain also is facing this issue, since universal secondary education and wider opportunities for various forms of higher education have become available since passage of the 1944 Education Act.

Britain and the United States share other common problems such as integrating minorities into mainstream society, declining local school influence as national funding and national control increase,

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Note: Seven British educators read the manuscript for this fastback prior to publication. The author, however, assumes full responsibility for any factual errors that might be contained herein.

and equalizing educational expenditures between rich and poor areas. Such problems have initiated much national debate on educational direction, particularly since 1976, when Prime Minister James Callaghan delivered a highly influential speech in which he asked, Why were 30,000 student vacancies in science and technology departments at universities and polytechnics unfilled in 1975, when industry cried out for skilled workers and technicians? Why did the brightest university graduates prefer an academic career or the civil service to working in industry? Should there not be more cooperation between industry and the schools? Is there sufficient emphasis in schools on basic math and English? Was the nation getting the best value for the $9.9 billion spent annually on education?

The prime minister took some of the sting from his remarks by phrasing them as questions rather than as assertions. It was a clarion call for educational reform, not unlike that heard in the U.S. in the recent past.

Prime Minister Callaghan's speech was based on a Department of Education and Science memorandum he had requested that asked, What has gone wrong with British education? The memorandum noted that since 1944 British schools had coped with an 80% increase in school population, had carried out massive school building construction to meet expanded enrollments, and had for the first time provided universal free secondary education. Yet there were complaints about school performance, about students' lack of discipline and application, and about their failure to master basic skills in reading and arithmetic. There was criticism of the new and freer methods endorsed by the Plowden Report (an influential government report published in 1967 that advocated reforms much like those of the progressive education era in the U.S.). These methods were called a trap for less able and inexperienced primary teachers who neglected the necessary planning of curriculum and systematic monitoring of student progress.

The memorandum cited criticisms of secondary schools. Some employers, probably recruiting workers from lower ability levels than before, complained that school leavers could not express themselves and lacked math skills and other basic knowledge needed for technical work. Some middle-class parents, fearing that the new comprehensive

secondary schools offered less rigorous education and so lessened their children's career chances, resented abandoning the traditional grammar schools. Industry was disturbed that many students turned away from the scientific and technological studies that the country depended upon for advancement.

The memorandum noted that some school weaknesses had resulted from the move to comprehensive secondary schools, which necessitated new patterns of organization, curricula, and teacher education. Rapid secondary school growth and rapid expansion of teacher supply meant that some teachers were less qualified than they should have been. There was also a shortage of math, physics, and handicraft teachers. The 1975 Bullock Report, *A Language of Life*, reported that "a third of those teaching English had no discernible qualifications for the role."

So read the Department of Education and Science memorandum explaining what had gone wrong with British education. In spite of these criticisms, the British have made great strides toward the democratic goal of providing a free public education for all. To understand how this has been accomplished, the following sections of this fastback use a question-and-answer format to help the U.S. reader become familiar with the British educational system and how it compares with the U.S. system.

Organization of British Schools

Q: *How are British schools organized?*

A: The British school system initially seems quite complicated if one has not grown up in it. Since understanding becomes easier in a step-by-step approach, the following comparison may be helpful.

The earlier U.S. pattern of an eight-year elementary school, four-year high school, and four-year college gave way after about 1910 to other arrangements to accommodate larger numbers of students of varying abilities. A major change in the U.S. system came as a result of the establishment of the junior high school or middle school for early adolescents. Similarly, British education's former main pattern was optional nursery, ages 2 to 5; then elementary education consisting of infant school, ages 5 to 7, and junior school, ages 7 to 11. Between ages 10½ and 12, students took a competitive examination called the 11+ exam, which selected the ablest for grammar school, ages 11 to 18 (some left at age 16), while the rest attended secondary modern school, ages 11 to 15. Those students headed toward university entered what is called sixth form, ages 16 to 18 (roughly equivalent to the first two years of college in the U.S.). The sixth form college developed as a separate institution after comprehensive secondary school reorganization in 1965. Students who wish to continue their education then enter what the British call "further education" institutions or they enroll in a university, ages 18+.

In recent years, secondary schools have become overwhelmingly comprehensive (all programs in one school building or complex of

buildings), and middle schools have been established. So now the pattern is optional nursery school, ages 2 to 5; infant school, ages 5 to 7; and junior school, ages 7 to 11 (infant department and junior department are often combined in one school, ages 5 to 11). A recent organizational change is what the British call "first school," for children ages 5 to 8 or 5 to 9, and separate middle school, ages 8 to 12 or 9 to 13; or combined first school with middle school, ages 5 to 12 or 5 to 13. Then follows comprehensive secondary school, ages 11 to 18, with most students leaving at age 16 to go to work. The last step is a further education institution or university, ages 18+.

Q: *How about compulsory education?*

A: The compulsory school-leaving age was raised from 15 to 16 in 1972. Some pupils continue voluntarily and without cost to age 18 and beyond (fees are returned or not charged to students aged 18 and under). Many take full-time or part-time further education in various colleges and institutes after age 16. A highly select group of 18-year-olds enter university. By comparison, U.S. compulsory education ages are 6 to 16 or 6 to 18, depending on the particular state, and just over 50% of all students enter some kind of higher education.

Q: *How can we trace a typical youth through the British school system?*

A: Such a tracing can give only a general picture; later amplifications in this fastback will fill gaps and add necessary explanations. Education systems in England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland are each governed, financed, and administered by separate Acts of Parliament. They have common features but some important differences. In this account, "Britain" refers to England and Wales; Scottish and Northern Irish variations are mentioned when appropriate.

Nursery School: To Age 5

A typical child might attend a private fee-paying nursery school from age 3 or 4; or one of the 650 publicly supported nursery schools enrolling 52,000 children of similar ages; or one of the 3,900 nursery classes attached to primary schools enrolling over 156,000 children from age 3; or one of the infant classes in maintained (i.e.,

publicly run and financed) primary schools enrolling nearly 269,000 children. The 1977 preschool enrollment totaled about 35% of all British children to age 5.

Primary School: Ages 5 to 11

A typical youth at age 5 would enter one of 23,000 primary schools (1977) in England and Wales. Over half of these primary schools take the full range, ages 5 to 11; about one-fourth serve only ages 5 to 7; under one-fourth admit students in the junior school years, ages 7 to 11; and some include those middle schools that are officially grouped as primary schools for ages 8 to 12. Most primary schools are coeducational. Three-fourths of the primary schools enroll up to 300 pupils. There are about 200,000 primary school teachers, and the primary pupil-teacher ratio in 1976 was 24:1.

Just under 2,000 of the 23,000 primary schools are in Wales, where, in mainly Welsh-speaking areas, Welsh is the language of instruction. In predominantly English-speaking parts of Wales there are over 50 bilingual English/Welsh primary schools and eight bilingual English/Welsh secondary schools in which Welsh is the language of instruction.

Transfer from primary to secondary education occurs at about age 11, but a growing number of separate middle schools have arisen as a link between primary and secondary schools.

Middle School: Ages 8 to 12, 9 to 13, or 9 to 14

Q: *What gave rise to the British middle schools?*

A: When the Labor government in 1965 first required Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to reorganize their secondary schools into comprehensive high schools, middle schools were mentioned as one of several possible options in the reorganization. Studies showed that under the old 11+ exam about 10% of the children had been placed in the wrong kind of secondary school. Psychologists identified the middle school years as a special period in child development and believed middle schools would provide a better transition between the informal approach of primary school teaching and a more formal approach to secondary school subject specialization. The growth of

middle schools, sanctioned by the 1964 Education Act, and the specific recommendations on length and transfer points made in the influential Plowden Report of 1967, paralleled the growth of comprehensive high schools and hastened the decline of the 11+ exam, which by now has almost completely been replaced by cumulative records, teachers' recommendations, and parents' and pupils' secondary school preferences. In January, 1977, there were 1,249 middle schools in England and Wales; 685 were for ages 8 to 12 (considered primary level) and 564 for ages 9 to 13 (considered secondary level). There were also some schools for pupils between 9 and 14 years old.

Secondary School: Ages 11 to 16 or 11 to 18

Q: *What are the secondary school options?*

A: Since Local Education Authorities now enroll 83% of all secondary school students in mainly comprehensive schools covering ages 11 to 18, the options are few for the remaining 17%. Ambitious parents prefer the declining but still prestigious grammar schools for their 11- to 18-year-olds, including their own sixth form (secondary school years are called forms). Sixth form is the final two-year, highly academic university preparatory course for ages 16 to 18. Other options are the few secondary modern schools for ages 11 to 16, plus a separate two-year sixth form; and a very few remaining secondary technical schools for ages 11 to 18 with their own two-year sixth form. The 1976 secondary school pupil-teacher ratio was 17:1.

Q: *What standardized secondary school examinations are used?*

A: The General Certificate of Education-Ordinary Level exam (GCE-O), intended for the students in the top 20% ability range, is usually taken at age 16. Graded scores in from five to seven subjects usually qualify the student leaving school at 16 for certain jobs. A typical youth may choose to stay in school and try for a better GCE-O Level score by repeating the exam, or he can enter a sixth form to prepare for a General Certificate of Education-Advanced Level exam (GCE-A) and try for passing scores in two or three subjects. The GCE-A is a matriculation exam (i.e., university entrance exam; some universities also have their own entrance examinations). Both the GCE-O and GCE-A

Level exams are prepared and graded by eight examining bodies, seven of which are connected with well-known universities. Because they were external exams (that is, prepared by bodies separate from the secondary schools) and because educators thought that too few students of average ability took the GCE-O Level exam, particularly at age 16, an alternate exam was introduced in 1964. Called the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE), it is taken at age 16 and is different from the GCE-O Level exam because it is prepared and graded by secondary school teachers and more closely reflects the local secondary school curriculum. While the GCE-O Level caters to the top 20% in academic ability and the new CSE to the next 40%, they do overlap to some extent. Equivalencies have been established so that a grade 1 in the CSE (the top score) is equivalent to a grade C in the GCE-O Level exam for purposes of qualifications for some jobs or for further education.

Q: *How many pass these exams at age 16? At age 18?*

A: In 1976, 19.73% of students passed the GCE-O Level exam in five subjects or the equivalent grade 1 in CSE. In 1976, 12.92% of students passed the GCE-A Level exam in one subject, 10.19% passed two A Levels, and 6.53% passed three A Levels. The U.S. has no centrally administered examinations equivalent to the GCE-O and GCE-A. While these two examinations are used to determine admission to university, they are quite different from the Scholastic Aptitude Test used in the U.S. Their closest counterpart in the U.S. would be the New York State Regents Examinations given in various subjects, but they are much more difficult.

Further Education: Ages 16 to 18+

A typical British youth who passes the GCE-O Level or CSE exams at age 16 (a relatively small percentage of all students take and pass the exams) may: 1) go to work without further schooling (job advice is available from a careers officer); 2) stay on at secondary school or at a sixth form college until age 18, either to improve his GCE-O Level or CSE exam scores or to prepare for the GCE-A Level exam and university entrance; 3) seek full-time education in a further education (FE) college; or, 4) enter employment and seek part-time education in an

FE college. Many employers encourage part-time further education through a variety of time-off patterns, particularly for new, young workers.

Q: *What does* Further Education *Mean?*

A: Further education, covering all post-secondary education except the universities, is offered in 30 polytechnics and about 550 types of specialized colleges such as colleges of technology, technical colleges, colleges of commerce, colleges of art, agricultural colleges, evening institutes (7,000), institutes and colleges of higher education, and colleges of education. Total FE enrollment was about 3,924,529 in 1975, and most students attended classes part time or in the evening.

Q: *Is further education, then, an alternative to the universities?*

A: Yes, in those institutions that offer degree level work. The various FE colleges tend to be industry-oriented and developed separately from the universities. Spurred by industrial displays at the 1851 Great Exhibition (the first world's fair) held in London and by German and U.S. industrial competition, a host of institutes sprang up: mechanics institutes, polytechnics (the first in 1882), technical colleges (the first in 1883), and others, offering full- and part-time programs. Almost all ultimately became LEA controlled and financed. The 1921 National Certificate scheme set standards and exams for industrial and artistic certificate and diploma courses. In 1955, to strengthen further education, the National Council for Technological Awards (NCTA) was established. It was succeeded in 1964 by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), whose function is to award degrees and other academic honors comparable to those granted by the universities. In the typically British fashion of having something for everyone, a system has grown up of two separate but allegedly equal and autonomous units of higher education: the full-time academic universities and the largely part-time commercial and industry-oriented FE colleges.

Q: *What certificates and degrees can be earned at FE colleges?*

A: The Ordinary National Certificate (ONC) and the Ordinary

National Diploma (OND) in 11 fields (business, printing, engineering, etc.) are popular because they approximate GCE-A Level exams as an entry qualification to some degree programs. First degrees, bachelor of arts (B.A.), bachelor of science (B. Sc.), and bachelor of education (B. Ed.), can be earned by full- or part-time study under the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Entry qualifications for those degree programs are GCE-O Level passes in five subjects or equivalent CSE scores, plus GCE-A Level passes in two subjects, or good ONC or OND scores in the appropriate subjects.

In the 30 polytechnics, 82% of the 177,800 students take advanced courses. Polytechnics have become centers of higher education at degree and post-degree levels, and they lead other colleges in preparing students for such pre-baccalaureate programs (comparable to our Associate of Arts degree) as the Higher National Diploma (HND), the Higher National Certificate (HNC), Higher Diplomas of Technician (TEC) and Business (BEC), several Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), and the Diploma of Higher Education (Dip HE). Besides these programs, polytechnics have become the major providers of B.A. and B. Sc. and post-B.A. and -B. Sc. degree programs. The polytechnics differ from universities in that universities grant their own degrees while polytechnic degrees are approved by the CNAA, which acts as a national accrediting body.

Universities: Ages 18+

Q: *What are the university options?*

A: To gain entry to a British university, a student normally needs to have passed GCE-A Level exams in two to three subjects or equivalent exams. A youth might enter one of Britain's 44 universities (35 in England, one in Wales, eight in Scotland), which in 1976-77 enrolled 272,000 students, 70% of them men. The universities vary in size from the University of London (36,000 students) to the universities of Wales, Oxford, Cambridge, and Manchester, which enroll over 10,000 students each. Some universities founded in the 1960s enroll fewer than 3,000 each. About 40% of all undergraduates major in science and technology, 20% in the arts, 20% in the social sciences, 10% in medicine or dentistry, and the other 10% are in education, agriculture,

forestry, veterinary science, or architecture. Earning the first degree usually takes three years (or four years for an honors degree). Just over 50,000 postgraduate students pursue the M.A. or M. Sc. degrees and the doctorate. British students (but not foreign students) may apply for and receive a grant covering fees and all or part of living costs, depending on family income.

Q: *Are universities elite institutions?*

A: They have an elite tradition; 24% of those entering a university in 1976 were working-class youths. The more numerous further education colleges, together with universities, will enroll 19% of all 18-year-olds by 1981.

Q: *How are universities governed and financed?*

A: The universities have royal charters that make them independent institutions and guarantee complete academic freedom. Government grants are distributed through a University Grants Committee (UGC) and cover three-fourths of ongoing costs and all building costs.

Q: *What is the Open University?*

A: This is a unique, nontraditional, correspondence university offering degree courses via BBC radio and television and specially prepared books and lessons. There are no formal academic entrance requirements or age limit, although most students are over 21. Students mail their completed lessons to tutors and attend required seminars and conferences at various learning centers. Courses were first offered in 1971; 58,000 undergraduates were enrolled in 1977; 27,000 had graduated by 1978. The initial dropout rate is high. Enrollees who are teachers used to predominate but are fewer now. Despite initial criticism from traditional academic people, the Open University's program quality has been vindicated and has been copied abroad, including in the U.S.

Teacher Education

Q: *How does a typical youth become a teacher?*

A: A major reorganization of teacher education is taking place be-

cause of falling school enrol'.nents and to provide greater flexibility. Formerly some 160 colleges of education offered teacher training only. Many of these are merging with polytechnics and other further education colleges to provide a wider range of courses. Others, while remaining separate, are broadening their curriculum to include more general courses. Sor.e continue to be concerned mainly with teacher training, and some are closing.

A typical youth wanting to become a teacher in an LEA school in England or Wales must complete teacher training in one of four ways:

1. By taking a Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) degree course in three years;

2. By taking a degree course other than the B. Ed. degree (normally three years), followed by a one-year postgraduate course for a teaching certificate;

3. Through 1979-80 only, by taking a nondegree certificate in education course (with the chance of being elected to study a fourth year for a B. Ed. degree) at one of the few teachers colleges still offering them; or

4. By taking a course at a university for a degree other than the B. Ed. and at the same time gaining teacher certification.

Most who earn degrees other than the B. Ed. enter secondary school teaching. Those with a degree or its equivalent in art may take a one-year course at an art teacher training center to become qualified as a specialist art teacher in secondary schools.

The Governance of British Schools

Q: *How did the British school systems evolve?*

A: Like many other systems, the British school systems developed bit by bit, over a long time, and as the result of many compromises. In brief, education was for a long time the province of the church and the prerogative of the rich. When the central government first offered grants in 1833, those church schools accepting grants (almost all did accept) were called church "voluntary" schools. For awarding the grant, the central government gained the right of inspection of the schools. In time, some church voluntary schools became willing to educate free some bright youngsters from families too poor to pay school fees. The 1870 Elementary Education Act established the right of elected local school boards to collect and spend local tax money for "board" schools where there were no church voluntary schools. So began the dual system that persists today of church voluntary schools and local government board schools, later called "maintained" schools. Compulsory attendance began in 1880 for ages 5 to 10; was raised to age 11 in 1893; to age 12 in 1899; to age 14 in 1918, when all elementary school fees ended; to age 15 in 1947; and to age 16 in 1972.

The 1902 Education Act called for the replacement of the existing 2,568 school boards with 328 Local Education Authorities (LEAs). The LEAs were, and remain, the education agencies of local governments. Elected county members (forming County Councils) in rural areas and small towns and elected borough members (forming Borough Councils) in metropolitan areas formed the local governments. These members levied taxes for and hired professional staffs for fire, police, water,

garbage, and other services to the community, including education, which was directed by elected LEA officials aided by professional education and clerical staffs. The 1902 Education Act authorized LEAs to begin secondary education. Some LEAs did build and staff LEA-maintained secondary schools. Most, with inadequate local tax resources, found it easier to offer grants to church voluntary secondary schools (called grammar schools) in exchange for which the grammar schools admitted bright youths from poor families on LEA-paid scholarships. Most of these "free placers" proved themselves good students and went on to Oxford, Cambridge, and other universities.

This compromise approach to secondary education was investigated in the 1926 Hadow Report, *The Education of the Adolescent* (government committee reports are named after their chairpersons). It recommended that at about age 11, marking the end of primary school, an examination (the 11+ exam) be used to determine which one of three secondary schools children would attend. It was assumed that the brightest 20% would enter the academic grammar school, another bright 20% of technically inclined would go to secondary technical school, and the remaining 60% of average ability to secondary modern school. This recommendation was incorporated in the 1944 Education Act, which, with amendments, still governs British education.

Q: *Why are some schools called* voluntary, *others* maintained state, *others* independent?

A: In Britain, which has a state church and a long tradition of church-connected schools, a dual school system has evolved. Voluntary schools came first and are still managed mainly by the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. These schools were designated as *controlled*, *aided*, or *special agreement*, according to the degree of inspection and influence the central government, through LEAs, could exercise.

Two-thirds of all primary schools and four-fifths of all secondary schools in England and Wales today are state schools, staffed, financed, and administered by the 105 LEAs. These schools are equivalent to the U.S. elementary and secondary public schools organized in school districts and administered under the laws of the 50 states. The 105 LEAs

appoint a board of managers for each primary school and a board of governors for each secondary school. Control, discipline, and curriculum responsibilities devolve from the LEAs to the managers or governors and then to the head teachers (the counterpart of U.S. school principals). In practice, the head teachers exercise almost complete authority.

In church-run voluntary *controlled* schools, two-thirds of the managers of primary schools and governors of secondary schools are nominated by the LEA and one-third by the church group that owns the land and school buildings. LEA pays all operating costs and appoints the teachers. In 1975 all but 225 of the 3,800 voluntary controlled schools were Church of England schools. The church owners can give denominational religious instruction for two school periods each week to school children with parental approval.

In voluntary *aided* schools, two-thirds of the managers of primary schools and governors of secondary schools are appointed by the church owner group, one-third by the LEA. Public funds pay for up to 85% of building costs; LEAs pay for building maintenance, teachers' salaries, and other operating costs. In 1975 nearly half of the 5,000 voluntary aided schools were run by the Roman Catholic Church. The managers or governors have complete control of religious education.

In voluntary *special agreement* schools, which are almost always secondary schools, LEAs pay most of the building costs, and teachers are appointed by the managers or governors. In 1975, over three-fourths of the 130 voluntary special agreement schools were Roman Catholic. Managers and governors have complete control of religious education.

In Britain there are also some 2,300 *independent* fee-charging primary and secondary schools enrolling about 5% of all secondary school students, which are registered and open to inspection. Some of these include such well-known secondary grammar schools as Winchester (founded 1382), Eton (1440), Harrow (1571), Westminster (1560). They are called in British terms "the great public schools."

Q: *What were "direct grant schools"?*

A: The term *direct grant* referred to some independent fee-charging

schools that were run entirely by the sponsoring church or other private owners. These schools had agreed, upon receipt of a central government grant, to admit on scholarships a certain number of bright children. In 1977 the Department of Education and Science forced these schools to choose between becoming LEA-maintained (state schools) or to continue as independent fee-charging private schools receiving no government funds. About a third of the direct grant schools chose to become state schools.

Q: *What is the order of responsibility in the British education system?*

A: Parliament, whose elected members represent the people, passes laws concerning education and appropriates education funds. The political party in power, headed by the prime minister and his cabinet, sets national priorities, and the prime minister appoints a Secretary of State for Education and Science who is a cabinet member and is political head of the Department of Education and Science (DES). The DES, composed of professional educators and allied personnel, formulates national education policy under the education laws. The LEAs are the channel for financing schools. Under LEA direction, primary school boards of managers and secondary school and further education college boards of governors approve appointments of head teachers and other teachers and oversee school operation. Head teachers are the grassroots powers who recommend teacher appointments to the boards of managers and governors. Head teachers set schedules (daily, weekly, yearly programs) and in all respects actually run the schools. Last in the line of educational responsibility is the teacher, who has a great deal of classroom autonomy.

Q: *What does the DES do?*

A: The DES formulates policy for all education in England (the Secretary of State in Wales has been responsible for primary and secondary schools in Wales since 1970 and further education since 1978) and also is liaison for universities in England, Wales, and Scotland. The Secretaries of State in Scotland and in Northern Ireland are responsible in their jurisdictions for the full range of education, except

that in Scotland the secretary is consulted about Scottish universities but is not responsible for them. The DES approves and advises on school buildings; disburses central government funds for use by the LEAs, University Grants Committee, and for other purposes; commissions educational research by several organizations, such as the well-known National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER); helps develop curricula and examinations through the Schools Council; and oversees education standards, largely through 445 of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs), who monitor and advise on the efficiency of schools and colleges.

Q: *What do HMIs do?*

A: The 445 HMIs in England and Wales are professional civil service career educators who are said to be "the eyes and ears of the DES." They monitor the educational system and report to the Secretary of State for Education and Science about all publicly and privately supported schools and further education colleges; advise the LEAs, individual schools, further education colleges, and teachers; conduct in-service teacher education courses; conduct surveys; and advise on curriculum. HMIs are recruited from head teachers, other teachers, lecturers in further education colleges and colleges of education, LEA officers and advisors, and from outside the field of education.

Q: *How important are the LEAs?*

A: The LEAs are all important. As in the U.S., local control of education has a long and strong tradition that the central government, despite its growing influence, carefully nurtures. Policy may be centralized in Britain's DES, but LEA control, management, and finance are basic to British education.

Q: *How do LEAs operate?*

A: LEAs are the education arm of local government. Members of the 105 LEAs are elected and are required by law to form an education committee with various subcommittees to deal with such specific areas as nursery school, middle school, secondary education, and further education. LEAs raise money through local taxes, employ professional

and supporting staffs (often including local inspectors), and employ an executive officer who in some LEAs is called a chief education officer (CEO) and in others the director of education. LEAs must also appoint a careers officer to advise students on career choices and to help them get jobs. LEAs serve populations varying from the smallest, the Isle of Wight, 109,680, to the largest, Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), 2,649,540. Large LEAs are predictably more powerful than smaller ones in administration, professional competencies and specialties, finance, and political influence.

Q: *Has the influence of British independent schools diminished since state schools became more democratic?*

A: Independent schools still offer students substantial advantages, according to *Inequality in Britain Today* (Labor Research Department, 1977). Fee-charging independent schools have small classes; and graduates of independent schools have a far better chance of getting to Oxford or Cambridge, going on for further education, and earning more money than do graduates from LEA state schools. In January, 1974, 4% of the school-age children were in independent schools where the pupil-teacher ratio was 12.8 to 1. In LEA state schools the ratio is 20.8 to 1. The 1967 Newsom Report showed that 70% of the directors of large firms, 80% of the judges, and 77% of the directors of the Bank of England had attended independent schools.

Q: *What do head teachers do?*

A: British head teachers are the equivalent of U.S. school principals. They make the day-to-day decisions and oversee the running of the school. Since curriculum control is highly decentralized in Britain, many decisions regarding what is to be taught and how it is to be taught must be made by the head teacher. Although some think the headmaster system is autocratic, there is also much accommodation and sharing of power in British schools. Britain has a tradition of strong headmasters, particularly in nineteenth-century independent schools. Today's head teacher has inherited this tradition and is subject to less public and parental pressure than school principals in the U.S.

Q: *Are British teachers more independent than U.S. teachers?*

A: British teachers, like the head teachers under whom they serve,

enjoy more autonomy than do teachers in the U.S. American teachers must answer to public pressures, parental wishes, and even student preferences. In Britain, teachers are less bound by these restrictions. They can be and often are criticized in the press and in reports, but their professional status enjoys a good measure of public respect.

Q: *How are teachers paid?*

A: British teachers are paid on salary scales established by a national committee composed of teachers and DES and LEA representatives. The negotiated national salary scale eliminates the problem of richer districts hiring teachers away from poorer districts by offering higher salaries.

Q: *How influential are teachers organizations?*

A: Among British teachers organizations, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) is the largest, with over 200,000 members. It was started in 1870, largely by elementary school teachers. NUT has been fairly militant from the start; and since 1970 has been affiliated with the Trades Union Congress, Britain's largest labor group. NUT's U.S. counterparts are the National Education Association (NEA), started in 1857, and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), founded in 1917.

Britain's second largest teachers union, National Association of Schoolmasters (NAS), has about 100,000 members (including 30% of all male teachers). It was originally formed to counter alleged administrator and female domination in NUT. In Britain, NAS prods NUT to greater militancy, much as in the U.S. the AFT prods the NEA. (NAS recently joined with the mainly secondary school-level National Union of Women Teachers; the merged organization is designated as NAS/UWT).

NUT's strength comes from its size, its many local branches that influence local governments, and its direct support of about 30 Parliament members, many of them ex-teachers, who support legislation favorable to teachers and NUT. In the U.S., the AFT has long been and the NEA has recently become strongly political, openly endorsing and financially aiding candidates favorable to their interests.

British Education—Blueprint for the 1980s

Prime Minister Callaghan's 1976 speech criticizing education was the impetus for new policies and reforms that are likely to play an influential role in British education in the 1980s. Following the prime minister's speech, regional conferences were held in February and March, 1977, to discuss school curriculum for ages 5-16, national assessment of standards, teacher education, and ways to link school with work. A summary of the regional conference proceedings was published July 21, 1977, as *Education in Schools: A Consultative Document*, popularly called the Education Green Paper.

The Green Paper urged continuation of the long-shared partnership among DES, LEAs, and teachers, with parental involvement at all school levels. The paper said that sweeping social changes required curriculum changes. Britain no longer was the center of an empire; it now was a medium-sized European power, although one with international Commonwealth connections and responsibilities. Its economy and standard of living depended on the ability to sell goods and services abroad. Commonwealth immigrants had made Britain a multiracial and multicultural country. As sex-role stereotypes were disappearing, women expected to work as well as bring up families, so distinctions between what boys and girls studied needed to be reassessed.

To these changes the comprehensive secondary schools have responded imaginatively, said the Green Paper, but too few schools convey to pupils the fact that Britain is an industrial society with a mixed economy; that it depends on industry to create wealth to provide social services, education, and art; and that industry offers scope for young

people's imagination and even idealism. Nor do British young people realize the interdependence of modern countries and the need to solve problems such as environmental pollution internationally.

Green Paper Recommendations

On curriculum, the paper recommended a "protected" or "core element of the curriculum common to all schools"—specifying English, math, and modern languages (and bilingualism in Wales)—and instituted a curriculum survey by LEAs.

On standards and assessment, the paper stated there is every reason to believe that standards could be raised and endorsed a national monitoring of pupils' academic achievement in English, math, and science by HMIs through the newly created DES Assessment of Performance Unit. Also, it was recommended that the DES do a national study concerning a new 16+ exam that would combine the different kinds of assessment currently made by the GCE-O Level exam and the CSE exam.

On teachers, the paper emphasized the need to upgrade quality, to phase out existing teacher nondegree certificate programs and replace them with B. Ed. or other higher education first-degree programs (one-fourth of the teachers currently have a degree). Preference in teacher recruitment should go to older persons, to minorities, and to those with work experience outside of education, particularly in industry and commerce. The paper recommended greater exchange of teachers between schools and colleges and a network of centers of scholarship and professional expertise in both subject fields and in such specialties as teaching the handicapped.

New teachers need the help of experienced teachers, and new teachers' permanent appointments should follow a probationary period. The paper said that teacher inservice needs would require cooperative planning with LEAs, with priority given to teaching in urban multiracial schools, to developing language and math skills, to identifying and remedying various learning disabilities, and to training head teachers and department heads to deal more effectively with administrative problems. Gingerly, the paper touched on ineffective teachers and the need to help them improve or to remove them (unheard of, since teachers are almost never fired).

The paper urged stronger links between school and the world of work by appointing people from industry and commerce as school governors and managers and involving industry and commerce in curriculum planning. Career education was urged for all students age 13 or younger.

Reaction to the Green Paper

The press had a field day reporting reactions to the Green Paper. "Higher standards to be set for teachers: greater help in schools for needy children," headlined *The Times* of London. Said one account: "Labor is trying to present itself as the party of high education standards and is stealing thunder from the Conservatives' long criticism of Labor for democratizing secondary education, eliminating grants to voluntary schools, and permitting lax school standards by encouraging progressive methods." Another account said that the paper was a diversion intended to take people's minds off the poor economy, high unemployment, and racial tension. NUT deplored the paper's focus on assessing teaching performance and the threat to remove "incompetent" teachers, labeling the paper as a smokescreen to hide devastating effects of recent government cuts in the school budget. "New action to weed out inefficient teachers and bring bad schools up to scratch," was the interpretation in another account.

Perceptive observers saw the Green Paper as expressing Prime Minister Callaghan's genuine concern about education at a time when enrollment decline, resulting teacher oversupply, alleged falling standards, and financial stringency required some changes in the system.

Common Core Curriculum

Started before the Callaghan speech or the Green Paper but published in their aftermath, the HMI report *Curriculum 11-16* (December, 1977) suggested that up to two-thirds of the curriculum might be common for all children to age 16. While leaning backward to avoid any suggestion of a centrally controlled curriculum, the HMI paper said that some common core of subjects was needed to tie together the patchwork of the various kinds of comprehensive schools that had

evolved. Variations included four middle school patterns and 14 secondary school patterns. A common core curriculum would also give an essential minimum to mobile youth. For example, statistics collected in 1966 show that 10.7% of British residents had moved the year before; 33% had moved in the previous five years.

One commentary on the HMI curriculum report mentioned the central problem: how to raise national standards while maintaining LEA and individual school freedom for local curriculum innovation and variation. While Britain has had no national curriculum, a required common core would be a step in that direction. Such a step has been encouraged by the back-to-basics reaction to permissiveness and progressivism.

Examination Reform

Tied to core curriculum is the concern about creating one examination at school leaving age 16 to replace the GCE-O Level exam and the CSE exam. The dual exam system is said to be expensive, confusing to parents and students, and administratively cumbersome to teachers who have the problem of finding and then steering the top 20% to the GCE-O Level exam and the next 40% to CSE. As one CSE student said, "We are just normal; they (the GCE pupils) are geniuses." Agreeing on one exam to replace GCE-O Level and CSE poses many problems: some students do not take any 16+ exams; separate GCE and CSE boards have differing vested interests; and the tests for each exam are many and varied.

In April, 1978, the Schools Council published its suggestions for replacing the GCE-A Level exam, now usually taken at age 18 at the end of the two-year sixth form. Passes in two or three subjects usually qualify students for university entrance. Instead of the usual three subjects now offered in sixth form, the Council recommended that five subjects be offered. It recommended that top students take "Normal" (N) Level exams in three subjects and "Further" (F) Level exams in two subjects. (F Level syllabi are a continuation of N Level syllabi.) N Level subjects would require about half the time and F Level subjects would require about three-fourths of the time now devoted to A Level subjects. The traditional A Level has been criticized for concentrating too much on

that minority of students who will specialize in a particular subject at the university.

First reactions to the Schools Council recommendations on reforming exams were critical, stating that double exams would be complicated and time-consuming, and that to be sure of standards, universities would probably require three F Level exams in some subjects. The Schools Council acknowledged that the changeover will take a decade or more. A final decision about examination reform rests with the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Teacher Education Reform

Discarding the term "teacher training" in favor of "teacher education" is symbolic of the end of the three-year Certificate of Education as the basic credential for entering the profession. After 1979-80, all nondegree teacher trainees must work toward a bachelor's degree (i.e., the four-year B. Ed. degree with honors, the three-year B. Ed. pass degree without honors, or some other first degree plus a year of teacher education). The move to an all-degree teaching profession follows the reorganization of the 163 colleges of education as separate institutions. They are merging with other multipurpose FE colleges and a few universities; many will close.

The 1977 Green Paper's recommendation that teachers have prior working experience, and particularly industrial experience, may attract more mature people into teacher education. But as of 1978, the teacher oversupply because of the recent enrollment decline has caused new teachers difficulty in finding jobs. The oversupply was dramatized in the central government's announcement in January, 1977, that teacher education enrollment (outside university departments of education) will be reduced from 84,800 in 1977 to 46,700 in 1981.

Total school enrollment in England (not including Wales), which began to fall in 1977, will decline to just under 6.5 million by 1989, a 25% drop in a dozen years. Primary school enrollment will have dropped from a peak of 4.6 million in 1973 to 3.1 million by 1986. Secondary school enrollments will fall from a peak of 3.9 million in 1979 to 2.6 million in 1991. The Labor government hopes to adjust to this decline in enrollment by retraining the teachers that will be needed

when enrollment drops, by closing or converting surplus school buildings, and by improving the quality of education for smaller numbers of pupils.

Nursery Schools

Although the number of births and school enrollment are declining, the need for nursery schools has grown. In 1978, over $100 million for buildings was authorized to accommodate over 200,000 nursery school students and over 215,000 children under age 5 who attend infant classes in primary schools. By the mid-1980s the government hopes to approach the 1967 Plowden Report targets of enrolling 90% of all 4-year-olds (53% enrolled in 1978) and 50% of all 3-year-olds (15% enrolled in 1978). To meet the needs of working mothers and the rapid demand for day care, particularly in inner cities, the government's Urban Aid Program for 1978-79 includes $2.8 million in building grants and $2.4 million in revenue grants to 34 LEAs.

Disadvantaged Children

To aid the inner-city disadvantaged children through youth clubs, playgrounds, and sports facilities, the Urban Aid Program grants will be expanded from about $60 million in 1977-78 to $244 million in 1979-80. By 1981-82, up to 1,000 additional teachers will be trained to serve disadvantaged youth. A Committee of Inquiry is expected to study the needs of ethnic minority children, of whom West Indians, Pakistanis, and Indians comprise the largest groups.

Comprehensive Secondary School Reorganization

Since 1965, when the government first asked LEAs to reorganize secondary schools in order to eliminate hitherto rigid selection at age 11+, the number of British comprehensive secondary schools has risen from 221 to 3,678 in 1978. The comprehensive secondary schools enrolled 10% of all British students in 1965; in 1978 they enrolled 83%. To aid reorganization, building grants allotted in England and Wales between 1976 and 1979 amounted to about $100 million. A comprehensive schools conference held at York University in December, 1977, and the resulting DES report, "Comprehensive Education," revealed that

most administrators and teachers involved favored the comprehensive form used in their areas and wanted a period of stability to make it work more effectively. Supporting the move toward comprehensive education was the government's decision after March, 1975, to eliminate direct grant grammar schools; of the 174 such schools, 51 joined or will join the LEA-maintained state system, four closed, and 119 (to the government's regret) preferred to become fully independent.

Curriculum

The DES expects to publish in 1979 a summary of ways in which LEAs plan to promote the teaching and learning of English, math, modern languages, science, and career education. HMIs are conducting a study to assess how students perform in courses in math, foreign language, and science. Assessment findings are to be published in 1979-80, and regular retests will be given to update the survey. An inquiry commission is to be established on math teaching, and LEA chief education officers are to be asked how their schools can improve their links with local industry and commerce. All of these steps, it is stressed, are to strengthen courses of study and to aid LEA curriculum control rather than to supplant it with central government control.

Post-Compulsory Education for Ages 16+

In 1979 the government plans to publish a policy paper on education and training for people over age 16, including the 12% who are in full-time further and higher education, those working and released for part-time education and training, and those who are out of school and unemployed. DES's "Higher Education into the 1990s" report of February, 1978, examined the likely future for British universities, since the number of 18-year-olds will begin to fall in 1982-83 and by the mid-1990s will be only three-fourths its 1978 size. The government plans to add to its regular education programs courses in those vocational and technical education skills that promise to enhance Britain's industrial and economic growth.

Integrating Class and Race

Britain and the U.S. are both trying to abolish inequality. Since the

1954 U.S. Supreme Court desegregation decision, the country has been actively working to integrate blacks, Chicanos, American Indians, and other minorities into schools and society. Britain, too, is working to integrate its population of immigrant West Indians, Pakistanis, and other former colonial peoples. In addition, Britain has engaged since 1944 in a vast social experiment: the integration of its historically separate classes. Britain wants to improve the education of children of the working class, whose parents had limited schooling that led to dead-end jobs.

Where U.S. racial integration attempts have included busing and redistricting, British class integration has been attempted through elimination of 11+ exams, use of middle schools, growth of comprehensive secondary schools, substitution of the general ability CSE exan. for 16-year-olds for the more academic GCE-O exam, and expansion of further education programs as an alternative to universities.

More Central Control, Less Local Initiative

The U.S. federal government now provides about 10% of the total cost of education. That 10% permits the government to have a great deal of influence over local education. Britain's central government control has also increased, at the expense of LEA initiative. The government has determined the pace and direction of the development of comprehensive secondary education, curriculum revision, revision of the school-leaving examination, teacher education, and further education.

The Use of School-Leaving Exams

A concern over the continuing drop in Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores and a mounting back-to-basics movement has led many U.S. states to adopt minimum competency test scores as a basis for grade level promotion and awarding high school diplomas. The nation's former policy of automatic student promotion is giving way to promotion based on achievement. Competency tests are now being given for school graduation as well as grade promotion.

On the other hand, Britain's national school-leaving exams are becoming more flexible and democratic to accommodate a larger num-

ber and a wider range of student abilities. To improve the quality of learning, the U.S. is attempting to establish minimum competency standards for high school diplomas. To improve equality of educational opportunity, Britain is attempting to meet the academic needs of those lower ability students who formerly dropped out with too little academic preparation.

Public Disillusion with Professional Educators

In recent years the American public has frequently rejected school levies. This rejection is no doubt a reaction to inflation and higher taxes and reflects public concern over the schools' failure to prepare students in the basics. Another example of public disillusionment with professional educators was the 1974-75 textbook controversy in Kanawha County, West Virginia, where fundamentalist Christians attacked, among other things, educators' selection of textbooks.

British disillusion with professional educators was indicated by Prime Minister James Callaghan's 1976 speech calling for a great debate on British education. An outgrowth of that speech was the 1977 Taylor Report, which recommended more parental, student, community, and industrial input into school management and less dominance by head teachers and teachers. Another example of the British public's disillusion with educators was the 1975-76 parent boycott at William Tyndale School in London, where parents objected to progressive methods imposed by the head teacher and some other teachers.

Conclusion

The once all-powerful British Empire has now been eclipsed by the forces of history. Still its influence as a former colonial power pervades the world in areas of government, science, and education. Many of the world's leaders are a product of the British or British-influenced education systems. Today Britain is a small island nation, economically troubled and struggling to maintain its role as a world power.

Britain, in the last half of the twentieth century, has made great strides in moving from an essentially elitist educational system to one that serves all the people. Through the democratic processes of debate and compromise, the British are reforming their educational system. Undoubtedly they have learned much from the U.S. experience in providing free public education to all, but the system they have evolved is unique to their British tradition.

Educators in Britain and the U.S. will face many common problems in the last two decades of this century. They have much to learn from one another. The issues discussed in this fastback provide the U.S. reader with a basic familiarity with current trends in British education. Hopefully it will serve as a point of departure for continuing investigations of British schools and ours.